

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
ACDA-07 EURE-00 EB-08 OES-06 FEAEE-00 INT-05 ERDA-05
COME-00 TRSE-00 /102 W
-----101905Z 110187 /50

P 101826Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6378
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PGOV WB GE GW US UK FR UR
SUBJECT: NEW GDR REGULATION ON PASSAGE OF OIL BARGES
THROUGH EAST BERLIN

BEGIN SUMMARY. A NEW GDR REGULATION WHICH WOULD REQUIRE
BARGES CARRYING OIL PRODUCTS TO WEST BERLIN TO BE
DEGASSIFIED BEFORE THEY PASSED THROUGH EAST BERLIN
RAISES CONCERNS ON THE PART OF THE FRG FOR BERLIN'S
FUEL SUPPLY. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR MAY MENTION THE
ISSUE TO ABRASIMOV ON MARCH 11. END SUMMARY.

1. FRG MINISTER OF STATE WISCHNEWSKI HAS INFORMED THE
THREE ALLIED AMBASSADORS OF A NEW GDR REGULATION WITH
POTENTIALLY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR WEST BERLIN. AT A
MEETING AT THE CHANCELLERY THIS MORNING (MARCH 10) TO
DISCUSS BERLIN AND INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS, WISCHNEWSKI
STATED THAT THE GDR HAD INFORMED THE FRG THAT AS OF
MAY 1 EMPTY OIL BARGES WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO PASS
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THROUGH EAST BERLIN UNLESS THE RESIDUAL GAS HAD BEEN
REMOVED.

2. WISCHNEWSKI ELABORATED THAT SUCH BARGES ALWAYS
CONTAIN GAS AFTER THE OIL HAS BEEN DISCHARGED. THE GDR
HAD STATED THAT THEIR SPECIALISTS HAD CONCLUDED, ON
THE BASIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES, THAT

SUCH VESSELS CARRIED A HIGH RISK OF CATASTROPHE. GDR AUTHORITIES HAVE INFORMED THE FRG THAT THE QUESTION IS NON-NEGOTIABLE.

3. ACCORDING TO WISCHNEWSKI, THE QUESTION WAS DISCUSSED IN BONN YESTERDAY AND IS NOW BEING EXAMINED ON AN URGENT BASIS. THERE ARE NO TECHNICAL FACILITIES IN BERLIN FOR DEGASSIFICATION AND NO POSSIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING SUCH FACILITIES BEFORE MAY 1. THE ISSUE THUS COULD BECOME A VERY SERIOUS ONE FOR SUPPLYING WEST BERLIN WITH OIL.

4. BECAUSE FRENCH AMBASSADOR WORMSER IS MEETING ABRASIMOV ON MARCH 11 AND IS CONSIDERING RAISING THE MATTER WITH HIM, THE BONN GROUP MET LATER THIS AFTERNOON AT FRENCH REQUEST TO DISCUSS THE MATTER IN MORE DETAIL. THE FRG REP (HENZE) EXPLAINED THAT THE BARGES IN QUESTION TRANSPORT MOSTLY GASOLINE TO STORAGE FACILITIES IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF WEST BERLIN AND TO A GAS PRODUCTION PLANT AT MARIENFELDE. THE BARGES COMING FROM THE FRG ENTER WEST BERLIN FROM THE WEST BUT, BECAUSE OF THE CLOSURE OF A SEGMENT OF THE TELTOW CANAL, MUST TAKE THE SO-CALLED HORSESHOE ROUTE WHICH GOES THROUGH EAST BERLIN BEFORE REENTERING WEST BERLIN IN THE SOUTH. INITIAL FRG ESTIMATES ARE THAT THE COST OF DEGASSIFICATION FOR EACH BARGE WOULD BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF DM 2500-3000. ASIDE FROM THAT, AS WISCHNEWSKI HAD EXPLAINED TO THE THREE AMBASSADORS, THE FACILITIES FOR STEAM CLEANING THE BARGES DO NOT NOW EXIST IN WEST

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BERLIN AND IT WOULD BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO INSTALL
SUCH FACILITIES BY THE MAY 1 DEADLINE.

5. HENZE SAID THAT, ACCORDING TO FRG INFORMATION, THE
NEW GDR REGULATION WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE NORMAL
PRACTICE IN THE FRG AND MOST OTHER COUNTRIES. THE FRG
WAS CONSIDERING HOW TO PROCEED AND WAS EXAMINING, FOR
EXAMPLE, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER IT COULD BE ARGUED
THAT THIS REGULATION VIOLATES THE FRG/GDR TRAFFIC
TREATY, WHICH STATES THAT TRAFFIC WILL BE CONDUCTED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.

6. UK REP (HITCH) ARGUED THAT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE
FOR THE MATTER TO BE RAISED AT THE WORMSER-ABRASIMOV
LEVEL UNTIL IT COULD BE ESTABLISHED WHETHER THERE HAD
BEEN A TREATY VIOLATION. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE
INCREMENTAL COST OF THE OIL PRODUCTS WOULD BE VERY
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SLIGHT. US REP SUGGESTED, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT IT
MIGHT BE WELL TO EXPRESS ALLIED CONCERN TO ABRASIMOV,
NOT IN TERMS OF A VIOLATION BUT BECAUSE OF THE
IMPLICATIONS FOR OIL SUPPLY FOR WEST BERLIN IF THE

PROPOSED DEADLINE WERE ENFORCED. HITCH SAID HE WOULD
NOT ABSOLUTELY OPPOSE AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN IN THOSE
TERMS. HENZE STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF WORMSER'S
RAISING THE MATTER.

7. BOISSIEU (FRANCE) SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER
FURTHER WITH AMBASSADOR WORMSER BEFORE THE MARCH 11
LUNCHEON. WHETHER HE RAISED THE ISSUE OR NOT WOULD
DEPEND TO SOME EXTENT ON HOW THE CONVERSATION WENT.

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